

## **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**Council Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

### **Question 1 from Councillor Aylen to the Leader of the Council**

#### **Question**

With the increase of size of shipping in the Thames estuary and the associated increase of sound and vibration that can be heard across all Southend would the Leader of the Council assure the residents of Southend and surrounding areas that the munitions ship Richard Montgomery that sank approximately 75 years ago today and contains over 1,500 tons of explosives is safe?

These comprise the following items of ordnance:

- 286 × 2,000 lb (910 kg) high explosive bombs
- 4,439 × 1,000 lb (450 kg) bombs of various types
- 1,925 × 500 lb (230 kg) bombs
- 2,815 fragmentation bombs and [bomb clusters](#)
- Various [explosive booster](#) charges
- Various [smoke bombs](#), including [white phosphorus](#) bombs
- Various [pyrotechnic](#) signals

The reason this question has been asked again in Council after it was last asked is that the local press have been featuring concerns over the damage the new larger ships are causing to important wrecks such as HMS London and increased wear on the pier.

#### **Answer**

Concerning the size of the container ships using the London Gateway Port, some years ago the Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned a short study into the impacts of vessel-generated waves in relation to the development of the port. The conclusion was that there was no significant impact on the Richard Montgomery wreck.

The receiver of wreck has confirmed that the Richard Montgomery wreck is monitored on a regular basis (the last survey took place in February 2019 and another is planned for August 2019). The receiver of wreck has advised that had there been any significant change in its environment or structural condition (regardless of the cause), this would be identified through that process.

You will see from the published reports ([mcga.gov.uk](http://mcga.gov.uk)) that the wreck has remained largely stable, subject only to very slow natural deterioration.

Therefore, the Richard Montgomery is safe.

## **Question 2 from Councillor Aylen to the Cabinet Member for Business, Culture and Tourism**

### **Question**

The Metal village green event takes over Chalkwell Park and stops residents from using the park for 4 weeks. This event costs £20 to attend on one day and no food, drink, etc may be brought outside the park. This event also stops local residents for some distance up to two miles from parking near their properties.

Southend Council give free tickets to the Metal Village event for unemployed residents and also provides £22,000 sponsorship to metal to hold the event every year, even if they do not hold the event. The Council also clears the rubbish up afterwards and makes no charge for anything.

Compare this to Leigh folk festival that does not stop anyone using any parks or open spaces.

On the Sunday of the event traffic is stopped from using leigh high street and the high street car parks are closed. The festival organisers are also charged for loss of revenue to these car parks. By 8.30pm everything is back to normal and all rubbish is cleared up. The local tradesman have enjoyed excellent trade as has Southend.

So would the cabinet holder explain as to why an event that has a negative value to Southend (Metal) gets £22,000 plus and an event (Leigh Folk Festival) that is the biggest of its type in Europe bringing people from across the world is a positive to Southend tourism and Southend economy yet gets no money and is even charged for putting the event on?

### **Answer**

Residents are not stopped from using Chalkwell Park for 4 weeks. Much of the activity over the whole period is in sections of the park and even during the main festival days, parts of the park are still available for public use.

All major events require infrastructure considerations whether road closures in the case of Leigh Folk Festival or Chalkwell Park for Village Green.

I do not agree that Village Green has a negative effect on the town and is a major event in the calendar. In addition to hundreds of free tickets being provided to low income families for the festival, the Next Generation day involves 4000 children in developing creative skills.

Food is allowed in the park and Metal contracts a specialist cleaning company as part of their event management plan.

Public transport links are clearly promoted on all publicity and Metal work closely with the bus and train companies alongside FowardMotion to encourage the use of public transport to the event.

Southend Council provides a grant to Metal for a wide range of activities, events and community engagement far beyond Village Green Festival. They also lever in additional creative sector engagement and funding throughout the year and support many health and wellbeing initiatives.

Public transport links are clearly promoted on all publicity, and Metal work closely with the bus and train companies alongside FowardMotion to encourage the use of public transport to the event.

The Council recognises the benefits that the Leigh Folk Festival delivers to the area and has supported it with grants and funding in the past. It also continues to work with organisers to minimise external traffic management costs to assist the event.

### **Question 3 from Councillor Wexham to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning**

Can the portfolio holder please tell the Council how many trees were taken out and how many trees were planted to replace them in the Council years April until March for the following years:

2016, 2017 and 2018.

#### **Answer**

In each year requested, it was necessary for the Council to remove trees, as follows:-

**2016/17** three hundred and ten (310);

**2017/18** three hundred and seventy-three (373); and

**2018/19** four hundred and twelve (412).

During these three years, the UK experienced several storms; these storms accounted and resulting damage resulted in 115 of the trees removed.

The total number of trees removed represents less than 1% of the overall tree population.

#### **The Council planted new trees as follows:-**

**2016/17** three hundred and twenty-two (322);

**2017/18** two hundred and seventy-nine (279); and

**2018/19** three hundred and eighty-four (384).

The Council's Tree Policy states that it will 'Replace removed trees, where possible, with appropriate trees, on a two for one basis.'

Due to a variety of reasons, such as underground services, sightline and street furniture, it is not always possible to replant trees on a street when one has been removed. When many of these trees were planted (some decades ago) times were different and little heed was paid to or known about these constraints, which today we now have to deal with.

In addition to the standard trees that have been planted previously detailed, over the 2016 to 2019 period, hundreds of young trees in the form of whips have been planted in green spaces across the town.

This administration takes the environment very seriously and trees in particular are a vital part of that and we will make every effort to improve the rate of tree planting and replacement to enhance the street scene.

#### **Question 4 from Councillor Garne to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Customer Contact**

##### **Question**

The season for large scale firework displays will soon be upon us. What measures can be taken to minimise the fear and distress caused to many domestic pets during such events?

##### **Answer**

In respect of animals the best advice is to keep them indoors and as far away as possible from the display. This includes bringing the hutches of small pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs indoors where possible, or covering them if not.

Close all windows and doors, and block off cat-flaps to stop pets escaping and to keep noise to a minimum. Draw the curtains, and if the animals are used to the sounds of TV or radio, switch them on (but not too loudly) in order to block out some of the noise of the fireworks.

Dogs should be walked earlier in the day before the scheduled start time of a display.

There is more detailed advice available on the web on sites such as [rspca.org.uk](http://rspca.org.uk) and [bluecross.org.uk](http://bluecross.org.uk)

## **Question 5 from Council Flewitt to the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

### **Question**

The Public Health Report is comprehensive and reveals some sad facts, including the late diagnosis of HIV as well as other sexual health criteria.

Can the Portfolio Holder say what actions he is taking or can take to impact upon these adverse statistics?

### **Answer**

Thank you Councillor Flewitt for your question regarding the sexual health data detailed in the Director of Public Health Report 2018-2019. A number of the sexual health indicators benchmark Southend-on-Sea as being better or similar than England however it is recognised that some indicators are not showing this outcome.

Since April 2019 a new Southend Sexual Health Service has been commissioned to deliver free to access sexual health services to the residents of Southend-on-Sea, this includes the testing, diagnosis, treatment and partner management of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. The service also provides access to a comprehensive range of contraceptive methods and support in managing conception options. The sexual health service will offer, from the beginning of August 2019, a new digital online offer for sexually transmitted infections testing and diagnosis with treatment and partner management being provided through clinical services. This service will complement the already existing HIV Home Sampling offer delivered in conjunction with Public Health England as part of the national service.

From September 2019 the Terrence Higgins Trust will deliver a sexual health promotion and community HIV prevention service and will bring additional resource to deliver community and digital outreach; distributing safer sex and HIV prevention materials; and Point of Care HIV Testing to both the general public and to targeted identified groups.

Primary Care services, delivered by General Practice and Community Pharmacy will also improve access to contraception, particularly Long Acting Reversible Contraception, for those seeking it.

The Southend Sexual Health Service and The Terrence Higgins Trust, in partnership with the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Communications Team and Public Health Team will raise awareness of national, regional and local campaigns through joint communication channels including social media.

A Deep Dive exercise is currently underway to review teenage conceptions and pregnancy with the outcomes being available in October 2019.

Public Health 0-19 services continue to support children and young people in school settings and supporting young families through Health Visiting and Family Nurse Partnership Services. This offer includes sexual and reproductive health advice and support.

Training is being delivered to support Southend Schools, through the Enhanced Healthy School Project, to implement the statutory Relationships and Sex Education curriculum from September 2020. The actions above detail access to specialist services; new technology options for delivering services; improved awareness raising; and direct interventions with young people and targeted groups, these will support an improvement in sexual health outcomes for Southend-on-Sea residents and intend to raise the local indicator outcomes to being better or similar to England.

In regards to working age adults, and in particular those in the older age group, we are currently in discussion with THT to engage them in our PH Responsibility Deal (Workplace health and wellbeing intervention) to raise awareness around the increase trend of STIs in the older working age population.

### **Question 6 from Councillor Flewitt to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning**

#### **Question**

Energy is a significant element in all our lives and the Council is ever reaching to make better use of all forms and refine others.

Will the Portfolio Holder take my suggestion to hold an Energy conference to evaluate how our local communities and the Council can best shape the future for energy within the Borough?

## **Answer**

We are committed to improving the Environment and the lives of all of our households. Of course Energy forms a large part of this work and involvement of the local community will be critical. We are examining how to make best use of the approaches and funding available within the Government's Industrial Strategy, especially as they relate to Local Energy Systems. A conference may well form a useful part of the local communities engagement work amongst other approaches, and we will be considering that.

## **Question 7 from Councillor McGlone to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning**

### **Question**

The residents of the Ekco estate in St Laurence Ward currently pay a maintenance fee to the developer for a sub contracted organisation to carry out the work which includes cutting grass verges and other green areas and emptying dog waste bins.

The maintenance fee is in addition to the payment of Council tax.

It is obviously clear that the sub-contractor is failing in its duty to fulfil this role.

Can the portfolio holder commit this Council to carrying out these functions in the near future? Thus providing the residents with a better environmental ambience and also reducing their costs.

## **Answer**

The Areas in question are privately owned and they have not been adopted by the Authority and are therefore not the responsibility of Southend on Sea Borough Council.

Residents will have entered into a private contract with the developer, and pay maintenance fees accordingly. If they find that the contractor is not committing to its responsibility, then the remedy is with the developer or whoever is now running the sub-contract. This is a private matter and we would suggest that the residents contact their maintenance company as a collective directly if they feel that services for which they pay are not forthcoming.



There are a number of areas throughout the Borough that are owned and maintained by Private Companies. These companies are responsible for Street Lighting, Columns, Grass cuttings from open spaces, litter and dog waste.

The Council is unable to give an undertaking to take on responsibility for those areas throughout the Borough, as the costs would be prohibitive.

There is a formal process in place for Council's to consider adopting private road and amenity areas. This is a resident driven process, where a collective agreement between residents is reached. The areas in question are required to be brought up to the Council's adoptable standard (this applies to either highway or park amenity areas) at residents expense, before the adoption process can take place. Residents may wish to consider this approach.

#### **Question 8 from Councillor Dent to the Cabinet Member for Business, Culture and Tourism**

##### **Question**

Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the situation regarding the Kursaal?

##### **Answer**

The Council retained the freehold when the long leasehold interest in the building was sold many years ago however it has no direct relationship with the subtenants and is not involved in the running of the building. The current owners of the building are working hard to give the building a sustainable future.

**Question 9 from Councillor Dent to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Customer Contact**

**Question**

Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the CCTV upgrade programme throughout the Borough?

**Answer**

The procurement process is in the last stages of finalisation. Key procurement documentation, including final revision of the tender specification and the Data Protection Impact Statement (DPIA), are in hand and it is hoped that the Council can be in position to go to full contract tender in the next month.

A decision will be made as to whether to avoid going live with the contract tender in the month of August due to the holiday period; September may be more appropriate.

**Question 10 from Councillor Davidson to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning**

**Question**

Last year, under the previous administration, the Council submitted a successful bid for funding from the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy project. This enabled Southend Council to plant 215 new trees at a number of locations in the Borough to mark the centenary of Armistice Day. Earlier this year, the Government launched a £10 million Urban Tree Challenge Fund so that 130,000 new trees can be planted in urban areas in England over the next two years.

Is the Council in the process of applying for a grant from this fund?

**Answer**

Before I answer the question regarding the Urban Tree Challenge Fund I can confirm that hundreds of young trees in the form of whips have been planted in green spaces across the town which includes those funded by the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy project.

As to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund this is a challenge fund offering 50% contribution to the costs of tree planting. It is over a two year period and this is the first year. In that first year only block bids are required to a minimum value of £500,000. As this then has to be match-funded the Council would also have to contribute the same amount. This of course has not been the subject of any budget consideration coming so early in the financial year.

A planting scheme of this value and consequent magnitude would constitute a massive planting in Southend which does not have the land capacity for such a massive amount of planting even if it were broken down into several areas.

However, year two is aimed at individual applications and would allow for small individual schemes working with community groups thus ensuring the tree cover in the Borough is enhanced throughout the area and aligning with a number of the 2050 objectives and giving a chance for all areas of the Borough to participate.

Officers will be looking at this as a positive opportunity in the coming months and engaging with community groups and to that end I would be grateful if any members have any suggestions for areas that would benefit from a scheme if they could let the officers know together with a local contact for liaison so that they can be investigated.